



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

- ART. X. — 1. *The Testimony of Christ to Christianity.* By PETER BAYNE, A. M., Author of "The Christian Life," "Essays in Biography and Criticism," etc. Boston: Gould and Lincoln. 1862.
2. *The Character of Jesus, forbidding the possible Classification with Men.* By HORACE BUSHNELL. New York: Charles Scribner. 1861.
3. *The Christ of History: an Argument grounded in the Facts of his Life on Earth.* By JOHN YOUNG, M. A. New York: Carter and Brothers. 1856.
4. *The Sinlessness of Jesus, an Evidence for Christianity.* By DR. C. ULLMANN. Translated from the Sixth German Edition. Edinburgh. 1858.
5. *The Divine-Human in the Scriptures.* By TAYLER LEWIS, Union College. New York: Carter and Brothers. 1860.

"THE strongest proof of Christianity is — Christianity." This is true not only of the inward evidence which it furnishes to the sincere believer, but also of its self-demonstrative force as a religious system. Within the last few years this kind of evidence has attracted a considerable share of attention, and more and more as the examination proceeds it affords the richest and most gratifying results. By a very simple induction from almost universally admitted facts and phenomena, we may attain to a conviction of the truth of Christianity as a whole, comprehensive, symmetrical, and conclusive, — a conviction embracing not only its moral excellence, but its historical actuality. We have given above the titles of some of the principal works on this subject, together with two or three which have only an indirect bearing upon it.

Every one is familiar with the fact that scepticism within the last eighty years has wholly changed its ground. Very little attention would now be paid to a writer taking the position that Jesus was a vulgar impostor, a mere selfish deceiver, or a crazy fanatic. The mind of humanity has received the ineffaceable impression that, whatever else may be true concerning him, this cannot be. Infidelity has abandoned a position no longer tenable; but it is not to be disguised that it

occupies one very perilous to the cause of truth, not so much because of its intrinsic strength as by reason of the ambiguities which characterize it. Unquestionably the most staggering blows received by Christianity in late years have been struck by men who, adopting the Christian name and disclaiming all sympathy with its enemies, have at the same time repudiated its essential doctrines, and have done their utmost to destroy the evidence of its cardinal facts. Conceding the exalted virtue and extraordinary wisdom of Jesus, and the unequalled excellence of the religion he taught, they profess to eliminate these from the great body of doctrines and truths regarded by the vast majority of his followers as essential to his system. They exclude the apparently supernatural in his character and the miraculous in his works, partly on the theory of exaggerated reports and impressions, and partly by representing him as an unexampled type of the moral enthusiast, who, while being slightly deceived himself, and suffering others to be deceived, yet did not, considering the age and nation in which he lived, and other cognate circumstances, impair his claim to the respect and admiration of the world as a great religious reformer. The only way to test this or any other similar theory is by an appeal to the facts of Christianity and an analysis of Christ's character. If the examination prove that these new teachers have conceded too much to be infidels and too little to be Christians, then they will be compelled to seek some new base of operations, or to surrender at discretion.

While so many sceptical writers both of the old and the new school have been setting forth the difficulties of Evangelical Christianity, it has been discovered that the difficulties of infidelity are, to speak moderately, not less formidable. These difficulties are not merely the irreconcilable conclusions of deistical philosophers, among whom each prominent writer seems to constitute a school by himself, thus forming multiplied and utter antagonisms of unbelief; but, as is more and more apparent, they are difficulties which are found to be inexplicable and inextricable on every hypothesis which excludes the supernatural and miraculous from the foundations of the Christian faith.

The teachers of sceptical philosophy are apt to forget that there are certain facts of which not only the existence, but the relation to certain other facts, demands explanation. In applying the *reductio ad absurdum* to the Evangelical theory, they are in danger of applying the *reductio ad impossibile* to facts that are unquestioned and unquestionable. In rejecting the solution furnished by the Christian system, they not only fail to present a better one, but somehow unaccountably omit to attempt any at all. They put themselves in the category of those whom Plato anathematizes as mischievous and wicked men, taking away a religious faith, no matter how poor, without putting a better in its place. Not that they reject all religion, but that which they furnish is but a reservation from the ruins of the evangelical system, and as such utterly inadequate to the wants of humanity. Even so, it is more and more seen, not only that the data upon which the apostles of this broader and less substantial faith proceed are the product of the doctrines they are seeking to refute, but that some of the principles upon which all moral reasoning depends are discarded by them. Their position is analogous to that of the rustic who takes his stand upon a limb from which he wishes to dis sever what seems to him a cumbersome and useless trunk, but whose enterprise involves his own precipitate and ruinous downfall.

That there are difficulties in the Evangelical theory, we are not disposed to deny. They are frankly admitted. We even admit that many of them are inexplicable. We may allow, without at all prejudicing our cause, that there are discrepancies in the Scriptural record, and, if you please, that there are statements not easily reconciled with known facts,—for we are willing to take very low ground. We do not now insist that the “volume of Nature” which is so confidently appealed to, and even the “inward revelation,” for which still more implicit faith is claimed, certify facts quite as incongruous and irreconcilable. But what we do aver is, that the difficulties are more and greater, on any other hypothesis that has ever yet been presented, than on the Evangelical. Especially is this the case in any theory which the skill of modern deism has devised. Let us look at some of these difficulties.

The character of Christ, on any supposition which excludes his Divine mission, and his superhuman qualifications for it, evidently presents more embarrassments than all those which are encountered in the effort to make clear and consistent the commonly received opinion concerning him. Is the fourfold story of his life a fiction? Then we have the most marvellous fact, that there were found four men — in an age and a nation the fables of which were of the most distorted and incongruous character, and in whose fictitious heroes there were mingled with some generous qualities others the most earthly, sensual, and devilish — giving us a conception of the noblest, purest, most elevated, best balanced, and most spiritual character the world has ever seen, our opponents themselves being judges. We do not insist upon the fact, that they wrote independently of one another, though they draw different pictures of the same individual. But not only have these men, who evidently were not men of extraordinary literary ability, given us, in an incredibly small space, the portrait of a life unlike any other that ever was lived, or even conceived; they have so written it, that the vast majority in all generations of those who have read the story have felt it to be the story of a real life, — and that, too, in spite of most skilful efforts to disprove its authenticity and its credibility, — in spite of very many difficulties which confessedly beset it. Here, certainly, is a very wonderful phenomenon, and those who assert it are bound to explain the marvel. For our own part, we might, with Bacon, “sooner believe all the fables of the Talmud,” than, as Rogers happily says, believe that minds which could *only* produce Talmuds should have conceived *such fictions* as the Gospels. “The wildest credulity of scepticism must shrink from the idea that four men have existed in this world who could have drawn four such pictures as that of Christ in his trial and crucifixion, if there had been no original for the portrait, no actuality for the occurrence.” The various expedients resorted to by sceptical writers for the solution of this problem indicate the serious nature of the difficulty. Few have now the hardihood to risk their reputation — if they have any reputation to risk — by advocating the theory of wholesale fabrication. The very character of the nar-

ratives renders this impossible of belief. The notion of a *mythical origin* involves several difficulties ; — such as that it was not an age of myths in the strict sense of that term ; that the length of time is incredibly brief for the formation of so complete a mythic system ; and especially that the system itself is so thoroughly in contrast with, and separated by so wide a moral interval from, all other mythic formations, as to render the mythical theory quite as inexplicable as the superhuman character claimed for it. Nor will the hypothesis of *moral fiction* furnish any obvious relief. The supposition, that what was meant to be mere parable or allegory has been so injudiciously set forth that men have almost universally taken it for literal fact, is quite as incredible as any other. Without insisting at all upon any infallibility of the Evangelists, or any supernatural help in their narrative, the lowest ground we are warranted in taking by the ordinary canons of historical criticism is to admit their substantial correctness ; and this involves certain elements aside from the natural and above the human. We shall recur to this topic again.

The *facts of Christianity*, both in its history and in its present *status*, are utterly unaccountable and inexplicable on any theory proposed by sceptical or naturalistic writers. Here is a religion which has been adopted by the most enlightened communities on the face of the earth ; which has clearly inspired the most advanced civilization the world has yet seen ; upon which rest, in a great degree, our forms of government, our systems of jurisprudence, our methods of education ; which enters into and characterizes our philosophy, our poetry, our art ; — a religion, as admitted on all hands, the best ever devised, and which has made its way, not only in spite of popular disinclination to the practice of its virtues, but against the most formidable force of critical and philosophical opposition ; which shows no signs of wearing out, but is more vigorous and aggressive to-day than ever before. Remember, it is a religion which has not only commanded the assent of some of the most powerful intellects of the most enlightened times, but has confessedly met the wants of multitudes of earnest seekers after truth among the masses, — those who were seeking truth, not that they might frame it into philosophical systems, or find

data for speculation, but for personal use and practical application to the most serious purposes of their existence. It is supposed that this system was devised by a Jewish peasant, who, though of considerable wisdom and virtue, was still an amiable enthusiast, who used certain "innocent deceptions" on his followers, whose public life lasted but three years and terminated in the death of a felon, and whose uncultivated followers presented to the world distorted, exaggerated, and superstitious views of his character and doctrine. Let us remember that this religion sprang up among a people particularly exclusive; that it claimed to be the fulfilment of promises, the realization of types, the result of preparations, of which they had been the sole depositaries and subjects for many centuries; that, having this narrow basis, this merely national adaptation, and these clearly inadequate means of propagation, it nevertheless filled and vivified all the literature and philosophy, and penetrated all the thinking, of the Roman Empire, and of all the nations arising out of it, in a remarkably brief space of time.

"How soon it completely modified, yea, completely transformed, that whole historical state out of which arose our modern Europe and our modern civilization! What Divine energy was this, that so far surpassed all former powers that had risen out of the Occidental mind, and might, therefore, be supposed so much better adapted to it? Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Socrates, — Academics, Stoics, Rhetoricians, Moralists, — *they* had never so stirred the world, *they* had touched no universal chords in human souls, although nothing could seemingly be more abstract, and therefore more universal, than the language of their precepts. . . . . The world was caring little about them or their systems; it was fast sinking into darkness, with all the light they gave. . . . . But when Christ came, . . . . . when evangelists and apostles came, how mighty the change, and how soon did it manifest itself in so great a revolution of human ideas! Will some of the men who talk so much of development explain this mystery, that has withstood all the 'sneers of Gibbon, and stands yet the inexplicable fact of the world'?" — Lewis's *Divine-Human*.

Surely the modern deist, in rejecting the superhuman *origin* of Christianity, is driven to the alternative of a supernatural agency in its *propagation*, or of phenomena totally out of analogy with anything else in the whole course of human history,

and to the philosophic mind absurdly unnatural. As an explainer of the facts, the Evangelical theory may assuredly claim a superior competency.

Not less perplexing is the difficulty in which the dogma of the impossibility of miracles involves one. We do not propose at present to discuss this dogma further than to note its implication that the Infinite God has reserved to himself far less power, or that he exercises far less liberty of action, than that with which he has invested finite man. But a still greater embarrassment occurs. There is a constitutional or natural conviction, common to men of all generations, of all nations, and under all forms of religion, that God not only *can*, but that he occasionally *does*, interfere with the order of things, and cause events plainly out of the natural course. We speak of this conviction as universal. It is so nearly universal as in itself to certify a natural law. The exceptions to it we do not overlook ; but they are clearly anomalous and artificial, not natural. The *assurance* that this conviction is false, and the demonstration of the impossibility that God can thus intervene in his own works, would be a more astounding, because a more unnatural prodigy, than any to which the credulity of the masses has ever been invited. We have no hesitation in subscribing to the notion, that it would require a miracle of the highest kind to authenticate the doctrine of the impossibility of miracles. But Christianity, as we shall see more clearly by and by, presents evidence which renders a denial of the Christian miracles still more difficult. Hume's great argument is, that, in order to the credibility of a miracle, the testimony for it must be such that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the miracle asserted. • Mr. Bayne meets Hume on his own ground, and declares that " the Christian has to produce testimony to miracle whose falsehood would be a mightier wonder than the miracle attested," and is fully able to do it.

Modern infidelity not only repudiates the supernatural in visible and palpable events, but avers that whatever influence or information comes to man must be in the " order of nature." We do not stop here to show at any length how this dogma quarrels with the whole structure of human society, in so far as that implies mutual action and reaction by human power ;



and with the whole system of education, in so far as it implies instruction by means of teachers and books ; though these are clearly out of “the order of nature,” distinctly artificial, and to be rejected on the principle under consideration. There are other and more obvious difficulties in the way. The denial of a supernatural revelation, as made both unnecessary and impossible by the constitution of the soul, is as bold an assumption as that of the impossibility of miracles, and involves still greater inconsistencies, though the same reasoning, in large measure, applies to both. Of revelation it is said that God reveals himself in the material universe ; also and especially to the pure reason. It is upon the latter that so much stress is laid by the ablest of late deistical writers. This “inward light” is said to be sufficient, *if followed*, to preclude the necessity of an outward revelation. If it were our special purpose to disprove the doctrine of our opponents, we might perhaps admit nearly the whole of this proposition, and show that, by the very negation of the condition in the words we have italicized, a revelation has become necessary. The “inward light” has *not* been followed ; by disobedience it has become dim. The way of man is dark, and the soul is utterly perplexed. We are disposed to yield all due faith to the religious intuitions. Without these, a revelation of any kind might be impossible. It is because the Bible appeals directly to these, that its truths are so powerfully felt by the masses of men, even when its philosophy and science and logic may *seem* to be at fault. In this respect the Christian revelation has long since demonstrated its superiority to all other books, — a statement which we suppose few will have the hardihood to deny.

But the peculiar contradiction into which scepticism here falls is this: The “inward light,” the “natural revelation,” which is so trustworthy and so exact in its intimation, has led the great mass of mankind to look for a *supernatural* revelation. As we intimated concerning the expectation of the miraculous, — of which, indeed, revelation is only a particular form, — so universal is this belief, that we are warranted in attributing to it all the force of a natural law. Indeed, we know of no conviction that is stronger than the persuasion

that God will reveal himself from without and above the order of nature. So deep-seated is it, that even the ten thousand corruptions of the doctrine and the multitudinous false pretensions of its actualization have been powerless to shake the popular faith in it. We hazard little in saying that nothing short of the indubitable word of God would be sufficient to demolish its force. As Rogers says, it would require a Divine revelation to prove that a Divine revelation is impossible.

Of those who have got rid of this conviction there are very few whose change can be shown to depend on any development of intuitive judgments. Doubtless almost every such person with whom we are likely to meet will frankly confess that he was led to this view by hearing, or more probably by reading, the argument of some philosophic mind. Thus they have had a *human* revelation to convince them that a *Divine* revelation is an absurdity; and "that is seen to be possible with men which is impossible with God"! Such denial of all intercourse between the Infinite and the finite mind, as Professor Lewis shows,

"can end only in pantheism, or the perfect identification of God with the world. . . . There is no supernatural; there can be no supernatural. Now the man who asserts this, unless he intends the merest play of words, making everything to be natural simply because it is somehow in the universal system of things, has undertaken a defence of a position more *incredible* — that is, more opposed to the common judgments and feelings in the very laws of our thinking — than all the legends of all the revelations, real or supposed, that have ever claimed the credence of mankind." — *Divine-Human*, p. 46.

Such are some of the difficulties and absurdities in which scepticism is involved by the effort to expose the inconsistencies and contradictions of Christianity. They show at least that nothing is gained in the way of natural credibility by adopting any theory yet devised to the exclusion of the supernatural. There are other features of the subject still more interesting, as illustrating the self-demonstrative character of Christianity. We have now to observe, that the facts conceded by the ablest sceptical writers concerning Christianity imply the truth of those parts of the system which they most strenuously deny.

The most popular and dangerous form assumed by infidelity at present is that in which it claims to be essentially Christian, and only aims to eliminate the true from what is erroneous, extravagant, and absurd. It scouts the charge of being Anti-Christian, — it is only more truly Christian, presenting a more genuine Gospel and a purer faith. Yet when these assumptions are examined, it is found that they repudiate all that is really peculiar to Christianity, conserving only what is common to it and several systems of paganism. These teachers who are thus more Christian than Christians themselves lay down a very broad platform, and, though discarding certain other features deemed essential by Evangelical believers, are in nothing so stringent as in the demand for the exclusion of all that is supernatural. All other questions may be left open; but this is essential. Now this assuming the name of a system from which every distinguishing feature is discarded, and whose essential elements are the object of unceasing hostility, seems to us very like a confession of weakness. Judged by a moral standard, it bears some similarity to the reported *ruse* of certain Rebel regiments in the present war, who raise the Union flag to lure our soldiers on to certain destruction. Most properly has a writer in these pages designated the famous volume put forth by certain English essayists of this school as “the Oxford Clergymen’s attack on Christianity.” It has also been happily shown that the word Christianity, in the common use of language in all literature and by all its votaries, with scarcely exceptions enough to prove the rule, is applied to a *professedly* supernatural system of religion. Any system from which this feature is omitted is just as distinctly different from Christianity as that is from Buddhism, Hinduism, or Moslemism.

But even in reducing Christianity to a cold, moral mechanism, there are concessions of certain facts which are of a character and in a position imperatively to require certain other facts to go along with them. The facts commonly conceded at present by infidel writers are, that such a man as Jesus did live; that the general features of his character are described in the Gospels; that he was a good man, and a man not only of extraordinary virtue, but of a wonderful spiritual insight

respecting the relation of man to God; that there dwelt in him remarkable wisdom and an unparalleled capacity of impressing himself on his own age, and as well on all ages since; moreover, that there has flowed out from him into the world a marvellous moral power, wide-spread, cumulative, and unique. But it must not be supposed that he was in any literal sense an incarnation of a superior or pre-existent being, much less of the Divine; nor can it be for a moment conceded, that he ever performed any work not explicable by reference to human skill and natural laws.

Now these things in Christianity, which a certain force of evidence within itself compels its opponents to concede, logically and irrefragably connect themselves with certain other things which are clearly miraculous. The natural necessarily implies the supernatural. "Given the credible, or that which is to be received on grounds of ordinary belief, and the marvellous cannot be rejected." It is as in comparative anatomy, — certain parts of the structure being given, other parts may unerringly be affirmed to coexist with them, no matter how utterly diverse the result may be from any known organism. It is thus that Christianity, as it stands in history and in fact, taking into account only what is now almost universally admitted by its opponents, testifies incontrovertibly to its own miraculous character. To this testimony we shall more fully appeal directly.

Just here we wish to say a word concerning the place which miracles occupy in the Christian system. It is not necessary to go into any philosophical discussion of the possibility of miracles, or any extended refutation of the dogma that the impossibility of any change in the existing condition of material agencies, except through the invariable operations of a series of eternally impressed consequences of a physical nature, is "a primary law of belief," to which both reason and conscience demand our submission. It is enough for our purpose to say, that any "primary belief" would be found to have its strongest hold in the intuitions of the great unlettered, unphilosophic, unsophisticated masses of men. Now, it is a remarkable fact, that just here, where this primary law would be most obvious if really existing, not the slightest trace of it

is seen. It emerges only in the minds of men given somewhat to critical speculation, philosophic discussion, and scientific processes. It has the appearance of an expedient adopted only after some painful consideration. The masses, on the contrary, in all ages and of all religions, give overwhelming evidence that the "primary belief," if there be one on this subject, is in favor of both the possibility and actuality of many changes induced from without the chain of natural sequences.

There has doubtless been much confusion wrought in the minds of Christians, and no small advantage has accrued to scepticism, from the views adopted by certain writers on the relation of miracles to Christianity. Miracles have been appealed to as giving a direct and *present* testimony in favor of Christianity; whereas whatever evidence they furnish was given many centuries since, and is subject to all the liabilities of historical events. Miracles do not so much demonstrate Christianity at the present day, as Christianity proves miracles. The latter must be done, or Christianity itself falls through. Christ, in his instructions to his disciples respecting the propagation of the Gospel on the earth, assured them that they should not only do the works which he had done, "but greater works than these." These "greater works" belong to all ages of the Church, and have evidenced the truth of the system with constantly cumulative force. Scarcely anything, not even present miracles, could be so satisfactory to a fair-minded inquirer of the present day, as the evidence of the wonderful facts of Christianity, both historical and current. With the people to whom Christianity was first preached, the case was different. It was an untried system. It must needs have been certified unquestionably to be from Heaven before it could rightfully claim credence. A new religion of such tremendous requirements, and involving such incalculable interests, would have been unworthy of attention unless authenticated by something unmistakably supernatural and superhuman. But we are not to infer from this that the doctrine of miracles is of no importance to us now. On the contrary, as we have intimated above, we are compelled to believe that to refute this doctrine would be to refute Christianity itself.

The relation of miracles to Christianity we conceive to be threefold. In the first place, the character of Christianity is such as to imply the miraculous. Its conceded facts are such as coincide most easily with the supernatural. Without the latter as a complement, the former must appear utterly fragmentary, discordant, and purposeless. Their testimony, when fairly given, is, that they belong to a supernatural system, and that to attempt to separate them from such a system would be to resort to a most unnatural expedient. In the second place, the scheme of Christianity itself is such, and the condition of humanity such, that its successful introduction to the world, except by supernatural or miraculous demonstrations, is inconceivable. The stern morality so hostile to the depraved inclinations and selfish impulses of man, the lofty spirituality so antagonistic to the temporal and material notions of the race, the character of Christ and his kingdom, so contrary to the traditionary conceptions of the Jewish nation, could never have gained a foothold among a people accustomed to believe in the miraculous authentication of new religious truths, except the teacher gave indubitable evidence that he came from God, by works which no mere man could do. Lastly, the Bible is so thoroughly pervaded by the miraculous element that any doubts concerning the fact of miracles, particularly with reference to the miracles attributed to Christ, would vitiate the whole record. Reasoning from what is conceded by opponents, as well as on the general principles of historical criticism, we are compelled to believe that the Evangelists stated on this subject, as on all others, what they themselves thought to be true; and it was scarcely possible that they could be mistaken as to Christ's own opinions and declarations. According to their account, nothing is more credible than that Christ professed to work miracles. Was he deceived, or a deceiver, or did he do what he is claimed to have done? The answer to this question will appear more clearly when we come to look more closely at the character of Christ.

There is another question lying back of this. Did not the Evangelists fabricate, or exaggerate, or at least give to the narrative the marvellous coloring with which the popular fancy had invested the remarkable incidents in the life of Christ?

As to the grosser aspects of this question, few have now the hardihood to maintain the affirmative. There is a more delicate and plausible form, in which it claims a more respectful attention. Still in any form the exceeding simplicity and evidently intentional truthfulness everywhere evident in the Evangelical narrative would seem to answer the question in the negative. Moreover, there is collateral historical evidence, as shown by Mr. Bayne,\* which indicates the impossibility of any other answer. The well-known passage of Tacitus, the integrity of which even Gibbon says "the most sceptical is obliged to accept," is important here. This assures us that, within thirty-five years after the death of Christ, the followers of him who had been crucified as a malefactor had not only increased largely in Judæa and all other parts of the empire, but that in Rome itself they had become "a vast multitude." We are informed that these multitudes clave to the name of Christ with the most marvellous pertinacity, refusing to abjure it even when the alternative was the fiercest physical tortures to which human beings were ever subjected. They had the firmest conviction of the supernatural character of his works; they believed unquestioningly that, after he had been dead certain days, he was raised to life and ascended to heaven. The Gospel histories were received by them as truthful and sacred records of his life and character, — a life and character which must, from the very nature of the case, have stamped themselves with intense vividness and potency upon their minds. It must be remembered, moreover, that at this time there were very many persons living, both friends and foes, who had been contemporaries of Christ, and who were amply qualified to testify concerning the truth or falsehood of the reports entertained among his followers.

Thus whatever of the mythical or fabulous or exaggerated there is now in the Evangelical conception of Christ's character and work on earth had all accumulated within the lifetime of thousands of his contemporaries, and of those who, both with friendly and with hostile eye, were personally acquainted with the objective facts of his career, — had grown up within

---

\* Testimony of Christ to Christianity, 59 *seq.*

the space of thirty-five years, — a phenomenon without precedent or parallel in all the history of the world. We are driven to the conclusion, that Christ intentionally gave the impression to eyewitnesses, to intimate friends, to avowed enemies, that he was a worker of miracles. If we claim for the Evangelists only the ordinary credibility which common historical criticism would assign to them, leaving out of the account all notions of inspiration or infallibility, it is still evident that Christ claimed to exercise a Divine power. Both his conduct and his direct assertions declare this. When John sent, requiring proof of his Messiahship, this was the answer returned: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." If he were not an impostor, a mountebank, or else a self-deluded fanatic, he must, at the very least, have had a Divine power working along with him; and if this were so, other vastly important consequences follow.

But while Christianity, in its historical aspects, when fairly examined, furnishes incontrovertible testimony of the miraculous in its origin, its moral and religious aspects produce no less strongly the same impression. It is not denied by our modern sceptics that there is in it a wonderful moral power. Its world-transforming influence cannot be ignored. That it has produced in individual believers from the first a rich supply of virtues, — virtues, too, such as men had little practical idea of before, — humility, meekness, and self-denying, compassionate, ministering love; that, in the common relations of humanity, in the family, in civil and political life, in the relations of rank, castes, and nations to one another, it has exercised a most salutary influence; that it is now the mightiest force at work in civilized society, not only socially, ethically, and religiously, but intellectually, quickening in a wonderful manner all the faculties of the mind, and opening the way for the achievements of science, the triumphs of art, and that inventive skill which so multiplies the products and relieves the drudgery of industrial toil, — we suppose none refuse to ac-



knowledge. We are to remember that this power extends itself to all classes of society. Its vital principles, its essential elements, are just as familiarly apprehended by the common people as by the learned. This is what the subtle and accomplished Celsus, the ablest opponent of Christianity in its earlier times, alleges as one of his principal arguments against it. "Woollen manufacturers," he says, "shoemakers, and curriers, the most uneducated and boorish of men, are zealous advocates of this religion; men who dare not open their mouths before the learned, and who only try to gain over the women and children in families." Another argument advanced by the same writer is, that "he must be void of understanding who can believe that Greeks and barbarians in Asia, Europe, and Lybia — all nations to the ends of the earth — can unite in one and the same religious doctrine." What Celsus deemed preposterous has, nevertheless, been accomplished; for though Christianity is not as yet the sole religion of the world, yet more nations, and those extending over wider regions than Celsus had ever dreamed of, are now recognizing this as the only true religion. But Celsus was certainly right in his general principle, that the invention of no man and the *cultus* of no nation could furnish a religion meeting the wants of universal humanity. The testimony of all the other religions of history agrees with his. Yet here is a system of faith which in its essential elements is well understood by all classes of society, and is heartily embraced by many nations most widely separate and ethnologically most diverse. The testimony of all sincere believers, of all grades, in all nations and in all times, is absolutely uniform and consentaneous respecting its effect upon their characters and lives.

Now the question forces itself upon us, To what does this mighty moral energy, prevailing age after age, overcoming the most stubborn obstacles and presenting no signs of diminution, owe its origin? It can scarcely be thought by any reasonable person to have been the slow growth of centuries; for at the time it first appears in history it had all the essential elements that now characterize it. Is it due to a fictitious personage, the work of the fancy of the earliest Christian teachers, who invented the evangelical picture of the Founder of their religion?

“ This runs counter to all historical analogy. The great revolutions of history have not been effected by fictitious personages, but by living men ; and those men must have possessed within themselves a real power corresponding to, and accounting for, the influence they possessed.” If insuperable difficulties are involved in the supposition of so harmonious a character endowed with such marvellous power being a fictitious production of a community, or a number of individuals, neither can it be imagined to be the work of one man. The author must be greater than his work ; and if the hero of the story is superhumanly great, still more must be the inventor of such a character. Nor does the theory of *Divine ideas* communicated to man relieve the perplexity. Mere ideas do not possess the power to effect moral revolutions. The masses of men are not largely influenced by abstract representations. They demand the concrete. Besides, it is utterly unaccountable that such ideas should have occurred to such men, in such an age, unless they were directly revealed by God. But why go so far out of the natural in order to avoid the supernatural ? Is not the appearance of these ideas in the world quite as anomalous as any hypothesis that has been advanced to account for them ?

There is only one natural and legitimate answer to the question of the origin of Christianity, only one simple method of explaining its singular facts and phenomena. Its founder must have been a real person, corresponding in character to the mighty influence and marvellous moral force of the system devised. The life of Jesus must have been a fact, not a fiction ; an actuality, not an idea. A more than human wisdom and virtue must have dwelt in him. The Author of this faith cannot be a dead hero, nor merely a crowned martyr. He is a living Saviour ; and it is only because he lives that his followers even down to this time live also. “ His doctrine is not so much a doctrine as a biography, a personal power, a truth all motivity, a love walking the earth in the proximity of a mortal fellowship.”

This self-evidencing power of Christianity is still more obvious when we examine critically and fairly the character of Christ. On the one side, we get such a view of his transcend-

ent moral greatness, his complete freedom from sin, his comprehensive judgment and practical wisdom, as gives to his testimony concerning himself the highest value, assuring us at the same time of the Divine power that dwelt in him ; and on the other side, we shall find in him a complete solution of all the facts and phenomena of Christianity, as they stand in history and present experience.

We shall still start from the low ground of the *conceded facts* of the life of Jesus. With these before us, we shall be quickly compelled to feel that *they* do not, by any means, complete that life and character. Evidently these natural and human elements are most unnatural and unhuman, if there be nothing else to go along with them. More and more as we look at them they will be seen to form the segment of a circle whose circumference, in order to complete itself, must pass, not only out of the human and the natural, but into the Divine. What some of these concessions concerning Christ are, we may see in the words of some of our latest and ablest deistical writers. Says Theodore Parker : —

“ He unites in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages ; rises free from all prejudice of his age, nation, or sect ; gives free range to the spirit of God in his breast ; sets aside the law, sacred and time-honored as it was, its forms, its sacrifice, its temple, its priests ; puts away the doctors of the law, subtle, irrefragable, and pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, true as God.” — *Discourses of Religion*, p. 294.

Again, he says : —

“ Try him as we try other teachers. They deliver their word, find a few waiting for the consolation who accept the new tidings, follow the new method, and soon go beyond their teacher, though less mighty minds than he. Though humble men, we see what Socrates and Luther never saw. But eighteen centuries have passed since the sun of humanity rose so high as in Jesus ; what man, what sect, has mastered his thought, comprehended his method, and so fully applied it to life ? ” — *Ibid.*, p. 303.

Mr. Hennel, who is more careful in his concessions, and who seems to have a fear of implying the supernatural in such a statement, reluctantly admits that, —

“ Whilst no human character, in the history of the world, can be brought to mind, which, in proportion as it could be closely examined, did not present some defects, disqualifying it for being the emblem of moral perfection, we can rest, with least check or sense of incongruity, on the imperfectly known character of Jesus of Nazareth.” — *Inquiry*, p. 451.

It is true that Mr. Parker has a discourse on the *Limitations of Jesus*, in which he professes to discover certain errors of conduct and blemishes of character, which nevertheless he pronounces “ venial,” but which subtract somewhat from the moral excellence of the portrait as furnished by the Evangelists. Mr. Hennel, too, as seen in the quotation above, avoids the intimation of moral perfection in the character before him. Yet evidently both these authors start with the postulate that there can be no moral perfection in mere humanity ; they also maintain, as a prime dogma, that Jesus was merely human. Hence it is not so much a close examination of the actual character of Christ that suggests moral imperfections, as the *a priori* theory which demands that they shall be found.

But why do these and kindred writers, so utterly averse to anything of the supernatural in the world or in religion, make such important concessions? Partly because the impression of Christ’s character on the mind of humanity is such, that a refusal to admit the moral greatness of its Author would jeopard one’s cause at the outset ; and partly because these features stand in such connection in the narrative of the Evangelists, that no theory of forgery or fabrication or myth or exaggeration can account for them. The very least that can be done by a candid sceptic is to admit so far their truthfulness. For, as we have before shown, more marvellous by far than all the marvels contained in the Gospels would be the demonstration of the proposition that such a character was a figment of the imagination, — the imagination, too, of such men as the Evangelists. We are not now claiming that these writers were inspired, nor even that they were free from exaggeration ; but that they evidently aimed at a truthful narrative, and that their exaggerations, if there are any, are totally different from what we should have reason to expect ; and that they have given a description of Christ’s character which

carries along with it, to the great mass of unprejudiced men, intrinsic and invincible evidence of its reality.

We do not propose to note each remarkable feature in the character of Jesus, as has been done so successfully by Mr. Young, and especially by Dr. Bushnell. We shall confine our remarks chiefly to these two characteristics, — his *moral purity* and his wonderful *wisdom*. These stand out conspicuously in the portrait presented of him in the Gospels; and yet the writers seem to be wholly unconscious of the impression they were making in these two respects. Nor shall we be able, of course, to enter upon an exhaustive argument for the sinlessness of Jesus, as has been so admirably done by Ullmann. We propose briefly to indicate the evidence of his moral perfectness, and the conviction it naturally necessitates in the unprejudiced mind.

In the first place, we note the remarkable fact, that, with the biographers of Jesus, and with all his apostles and followers whose writings have come down to us, his moral perfectness is a prevailing idea. We call it remarkable, because such an assumption has never been made by the biographers of any other person who ever lived. It would, in any other case we can think of, be so intrinsically improbable, that such a character claimed for the subject of the biography would militate fatally against the whole work. It will be remembered here, that there is no attempt on the part of the early friends of Jesus to prove his sinlessness. Nor is it frequently brought in, as if it were a matter of doubt. It seems to be such a universal and withal natural impression prevailing among the early Christians, and received from personal intercourse with Jesus, or from those who had been his intimate associates, that there was no call for any testimony concerning it, still less for an attempt at demonstration. In fact, it is less the direct declaration than the implication which the narrative of his life conveys that suggests the thought of his sinlessness.

“ The picture of Jesus which the Gospels everywhere present to us, and that which the Apostles everywhere describe, is such that, even if it had not been expressly stated in Scripture that he was without sin, we could never have conceived of sin, of separation from God, of moral obliquity, as forming a feature in that picture, without being sensible

that we should thus materially disfigure and deface it, nay, destroy it altogether." — *Ullmann*, p. 78.

Hence it was perfectly natural that the Apostles should refer to this characteristic as something to be taken for granted, as an essential feature of the Messiah's character. They call him "the Holy One and the Just." They speak of him as "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." They allude to the fact that "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was sacrificed as a "lamb without blemish and without spot." As the true High-Priest, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"; who needed not, like the other priests, to offer up sacrifice for his own sins, but who, just because there was in him no sin, was able to take away our sins.

It is also interesting to observe the direct testimony which Jesus himself gives concerning his own moral state. It is worthy of remark, that there is no other instance conceivable in which a mere mortal man could proclaim his own sinlessness, or in any way proceed upon that assumption without at once repelling those to whom he addressed himself. Any real person, whatever his enterprise, would hopelessly ruin it by any such public pretension. In any fictitious creation, it would be regarded at once as an utterly unwarrantable extravagance, and also as a feature with which the most consummate genius would be unable to make the other elements of a whole life constantly harmonize. Yet no feeling of incongruity and absurdity arises in viewing the life and character of Jesus. No one, unless impelled by some consideration foreign to the subject, ever revolts at the loftiest assumptions of Christ concerning himself. Looking, then, at the testimony of Christ, this strikes us as singular, though none of the writers of the New Testament take pains to call our attention to the singularity, that he never, in any of his addresses to men or his prayers to God, intimates in the remotest manner any consciousness of sin, — that there is no humbling himself before God on account of sin, no prayer for forgiveness. It is the grand peculiarity of his piety, that he never regrets anything that he has done or been, — that he expresses nowhere a single feeling of compunction or the least sense of unworthiness.

But there are not wanting express declarations from his own lips concerning his purity of character. "I do always," says he, "those things that please Him." "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Many other such passages there are in which he holds himself up as glorifying the name of the Father in the world,—as one who sanctifies himself for his own, who has overcome the world, and who imparts a peace that the world cannot take away. "There are expressions which present to us the picture of a life which not only had in it no place for sin, but, more than this, which can only be thought of as an actually perfect life." At the close of his life, surrounded by bitterly hostile minds, so far as all temporal or human hopes are concerned utterly defeated and frustrated in his purposes, he stands up and boldly challenges his accusers, in the question, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

It must be remembered that this was the man who of all that have ever lived had the keenest perception of sin in others, and who has uncovered its to them unsuspected lurking-places in the human character, and shown a power of moral analysis unequalled by any other. That it was impossible for him to be deceived is clear, not only from this, but, as we shall have occasion to observe directly, from what we know of his practical wisdom. Was there, then, a purposely false assumption on his part? Was he seeking to produce a false impression of his perfectness? This supposition is precluded by what is universally conceded concerning him. If not absolutely sinless, it is acknowledged that he goes immeasurably before all other men in this direction. Consequently, the thought that he could in the slightest degree have intended to deceive is not merely shocking to Christians, but utterly inconceivable by any fair-minded sceptic.

But, after all, the moral perfection of Jesus rests not so much upon what any of his followers said of him, nor on particular declarations by himself, or on what he did not say, as on the inevitable and ineffaceable impression which the description of his life, as presented in the evangelical record, makes upon the mind of the simple reader. The masses of men *feel* that *his* was a morally stainless character, while an assumption or an

assertion of this characteristic for any other man would hopelessly imperil his cause. As De Wette says, "The man who comes without preconceived opinion to the life of Jesus, and who yields himself up to the impression it makes, will feel no manner of doubt he is the most exalted character and the purest soul that history presents to us."

The remarkable wisdom of Jesus has been acknowledged by all the opponents of Christianity who pretend to any candor in argument. His intellectual superiority is scarcely inferior to his moral exaltation. There is a wonderful simplicity, yet a comprehensiveness and a majesty, which are really sublime. The all-penetrating keenness of perception, the perfect clearness of vision, which characterize him, have, to say the least, no parallel. This wisdom, too, is clearly unlearned, in the popular sense of that term. There is nothing which we can term scholarly in his thoughts or discourses. His mind has not been formed, nor have his powers been disciplined, in any human school. He refers to no authority, alludes to no literary or philosophic standards. He rarely quotes history, and when he does, it is the sacred history of the Hebrew race. His classics are the open fields, the voices of nature, the universally audible and apprehensible utterances of the outlying world. Scan him as we will, — and no man that ever lived has been exposed to such searching criticism, — we can detect no lack of balance in the smallest particular. This symmetry, too, is seen in his teaching. He has no philosophical speculations; he rarely, we might almost say never, argues; he simply talks as one who is telling us what he knows of God and spiritual things. His simple telling brings the reality, carries with it a certain inevitable conviction of its truthfulness. "Never man spake like this man," say his hearers. His words bear in them the impress, the "authority," of their own reality. He borrows nothing from his own age or any other age. His notions are quite different from almost all that prevail around him. All of his principal doctrines are directly antagonistic to the traditionary and popular expectations of his nation. We can see for ourselves, in the simple directness and freedom of his teachings, that whatever he advances is from himself.

Yet this "Jewish peasant," born among a narrow and exclu-



sive people, in an unspiritual and superstitious community, brought up as a working mechanic, having only three years of public life, leaving no writings of any sort behind him, and having gathered but a very few obscure and timid followers, who appeared to be hopelessly scattered by his discomfiture and his appallingly ignominious end, has communicated to the world, in brief discourses and fragmentary conversations treasured up and reported by his simple-minded friends, a system of religion which proves to be the mightiest moral force that ever entered into human society ; which now, after the lapse of ages, is more studied and more thoroughly appreciated for its grandeur and beauty than ever before, and which now as never before commands the homage even of those who deny some of its essential features.

We may not pause to consider at length the cool, calm, intellectual dignity of this man, — never inconsistent, never disappointed, never embarrassed, never losing his balance. What artful questions were proposed for his solution ! What skilful combinations were formed, by which it would seem that he must surely be baffled ! Yet with what amazing facility does he confound the devices of his enemies, and even extort their admiration ! These are but small indications of the controlled and controlling power that dwelt in him. There were times when he triumphed grandly over his enemies, — when the populace, “the world, had gone after him.” Yet not for a moment, nor by a hair’s breadth, does he swerve from his painful and self-sacrificing mission. There were times, too, when he was left alone, and the storm of execration, of ignominy, of agony, was breaking loose in fearful fury upon him. Still, with steady persistence, he avows the same lofty purpose and mysterious mission, — “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.”

Surely nothing of self-deception, not the least taint of fanaticism, nor even of that delusion which sometimes characterizes great minds, could have found a place in him. Not thus could he have impressed himself on the world’s mind with such potency and vividness ; still less have been able to communicate such a wondrous new life to humanity. If, then, he is simply a man, “he is most certainly a new and singular kind of man,

never before heard of, — one who visibly is quite as great a miracle in the world as if he were not a man.”

Now if he be such a man in respect of virtue and wisdom as we have but feebly indicated, then it is impossible to conceive that he could have practised deception on others, or have been subject to it in himself. What he said concerning himself must have been simply and literally true. Even allowing that these utterances have been imperfectly communicated to us, yet if there be *anything* true concerning him, if there be anything authentic in *any* history, he emphatically claimed miraculous power.

“Were those mighty works a deception? Did the words in which Christ searched into motive and pierced the subtlest hypocrisy go like daggers through his own heart? That is the question. There is no evading it. History has heard of no Christ who was not a miracle-worker. Jews and disciples, Christians and infidels, Matthew and Luke, Celsus and Julian, all know Christ as one who constantly, and for years, declared himself able to raise the dead. Can human conception embrace the thought that he was lying? No. The conscience and the intellect of the race start back appalled at the imagination of a miracle so stupendous. The crushing of all the stars into powder in one grasp of God’s hand would not be such a miracle.” — *Bayne*, pp. 105, 106.

There are, moreover, still more surprising assumptions made by Jesus, which imply not merely supernatural power, but a superhuman character. Imagine a mere man saying, “I came forth from the Father.” “Ye are from beneath; I am from above.” “I am the light of the world.” “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” “I and my Father are one.” Scores of such utterances may be quoted, which in the mouth of any other man, be he the best and wisest that has ever lived, would evince the most intolerable arrogance and presumption. The putting forth of such amazing pretensions would in a moment annihilate the highest reputation ever achieved. Yet these claims on the part of Jesus create no feeling of disgust and no sense of incongruity. There seems to be somehow a perfect fitness and naturalness in the assumptions. No sceptic or infidel even can now be called to mind

who has accused him as a conceited person, or dared to assail him in this the weakest and most absurd, if not the strongest and holiest point of his character.

Clearly enough the easiest way to account for Christianity is to regard it, as it claims to be, as a supernatural religion. The human and natural in it testify to the superhuman and supernatural in its origin and character. Its Founder was, to speak very tamely, a person too wise to be deluded, too holy to deceive. He unmistakably claimed for himself not only supernatural power, but a Divine character. Sceptical opposition to Christianity, when exposed to plain natural tests, evinces the most unnatural hypotheses, the most violent, unlikely, and absurd marvels. The miracles of the Bible are startling; those of infidelity are monstrous.

---

ART. XI.—1. *La Grèce Contemporaine*. Par EDMOND ABOUT. Paris. 1855.

2. *Le Roi des Montagnes*. Par EDMOND ABOUT. Paris. 1856.\*

THE events which have recently occurred in Greece, the dethronement of Otho, the interregnum, and the subsequent election of Prince George of Denmark to the crown, have excited considerable attention in Europe. Greece is like a spoiled child under the guardianship of a number of jealous aunts, who are more or less disturbed according to the proportion in which the affection of their pet is distributed among them. Any irregularity in the conduct of the foreign relations of that miniature monarchy of a million souls is attended with complications that wellnigh throw the five great powers into hysteria. But it is otherwise on this side of the Atlantic. In ordinary

---

\* These books of M. About were *noticed*, but not *reviewed*, shortly after their appearance. As the first of them is not yet obsolete, or even obsolescent, in its general statements, while the other has a vividness of characterization and an intensity of dramatic power which ought to render it a work of more than ephemeral interest, we have thought the interval that has elapsed since their publication an insufficient reason for declining to print this article. — ED.